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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/SA/EX FOR AUSTIN-FERGUSON; DEPT
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: WB/G SITREP: SENIOR PA OFFICIAL ASSAULTED IN WEST
BANK: JULY 12, 2005 (1900 HOURS LOCAL)

This is a joint Embassy/ConGen cable.

1. (SBU) Summary: A senior official from the Palestinian Authority (PA) Ministry of the Interior (MOI) on July 12 sustained injuries from an attack by unknown assailants as he traveled from Jerusalem to Ramallah. The MOI official was later hospitalized, but is expected to recover from his injuries. In Shove Shomron settlement, near Tulkarm, on July 12, a would-be suicide bomber detonated a car load of explosives at the settlement's entrance gate, but only the bomber was injured in the blast. Elsewhere in the West Bank, the IDF on July 11 arrested three Palestinians during an operation in Hebron. In the Gaza Strip, one Israeli citizen was lightly injured when an IDF bulldozer and civilians were attacked July 11 with small arms fire and two hand grenades north of the Rafah crossing. Two IDF soldiers were lightly wounded on July 12 when an explosive device detonated near their jeep on patrol near Nezer Hazani. In addition, there were reported incidents of rocket and mortar fire at Israeli targets, but no reported injuries. End summary.

West Bank

2. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Death: Nil.

-- Injury: Palestinian gunmen on July 12 assaulted the PA Ministry of Interior Director General, Ibrahim Salama, as he was traveling from Jerusalem to Ramallah. Salama sustained injuries from the attack and was hospitalized following the incident.

-- Attack: Palestinians on July 11 threw two Molotov cocktails at an Israeli vehicle traveling near Homesh settlement, north of Nablus. There were no reported injuries from this incident.

-- Attack: Palestinians July 11 threw a pipe bomb at an IDF jeep traveling near the Aidah refugee camp near Bethlehem. There were no reported injuries from this incident.

-- Attack/Injury: In Shove Shomron settlement, near Tulkarm, on July 12, a Palestinian would-be suicide bomber detonated a car load of explosives at the settlement's entrance gate, but only the bomber was injured in the blast, according to Israeli radio.

-- Shooting: Unknown assailants on July 11 fired gunshots at the home of the local Fatah leader in Hizma village, north of Jerusalem. There were no injuries reported from this incident.

3. (SBU) ARRESTS/SECURITY:

-- Arrests: The IDF on July 11 entered Hebron and arrested three Palestinians, according to Palestinian sources.

-- Curfew: The IDF continued on July 12 to impose a curfew on al-Mughayyir village, northeast of Ramallah, following an attack on an IDF vehicle that resulted in injuries to one Israeli soldier, according to Palestinian security sources.

4. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- According to Palestinian media reports, Fatah Central Committee head Faruq al-Qaddumi said that legislative council elections would be held on January 20, 2006. In addition, the Fatah General Congress was rescheduled for March 21, 2006.

Gaza

5. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths: Nil.

-- Injuries/Shootings: According to the IDF, one Israeli citizen was lightly injured when an IDF bulldozer and civilians were attacked July 11 with small arms fire and two hand grenades north of the Rafah crossing. UNRWA reported that the attack involved an RPG (instead of hand grenades) and that the IDF returned fire into the Al Shouka area.

-- Injuries/Explosive Devices: IDF radio reported that two soldiers were lightly wounded on July 12 when an explosive device detonated near their jeep on patrol near Nezer Hazani. UNRWA reported that the explosion was caused by an RPG and that the IDF closed the Gush Qatif checkpoint separating northern and southern Gaza in response.

-- Injuries/Explosive Devices: The Voice of Palestine reported July 12 that a Palestinian in Rafah was injured while preparing an explosive device in his house.

-- Shootings: In addition to the shooting listed under "injuries," the IDF reported three other shooting incidents: shots fired on July 11 at an IDF outpost located one kilometer east of Netzarim; shots fired at an IDF APC located 1.5 kilometers south of the Sufa crossing; and shots fired at an IDF outpost south of Rafah. UNRWA reported that the IDF responded to the latter attack with fire into the Al Barahma area and Block J. There were no reported injuries in these three incidents.

-- Explosive Devices: The IDF said that Palestinian police located and disarmed an explosive device located approximately three kilometers southeast of the Sufa crossing.

-- Mortars: The IDF reported that on July 11, mortar shells were fired at civilians and IDF forces in two locations. One shell was launched at an IDF outpost located 50 meters from Netzarim (confirmed by UNRWA), while four shells were launched in the vicinity of Neve Dekalim. UNRWA said the latter attack consisted of three rounds, adding that the Abu Rish Brigades claimed responsibility. No injuries were reported in either incident.

-- Explosion: UNRWA reported that the IDF had identified and detonated an explosive device on July 11 near Nezanit.

-- Rockets: According to UNRWA, Palestinians fired two homemade rockets at IDF troops on July 11 near the Sofa crossing. The military wing of Fatah reportedly claimed responsibility.

-- Rockets: UNRWA reported that Palestinians fired three homemade rockets on July 11 at Neve Dekalim.

-- Protest: UNRWA reported that 200 disabled Palestinians protested on July 12 in front of the PLC building in Gaza City. The demonstrators allegedly damaged two PA automobiles on the compound before PA police arrived to calm the situation.

16. (SBU) ARRESTS:

-- Arrest: UNRWA reported that a 19-year-old unarmed Palestinian was arrested on July 11 near Khan Yunis while trying to infiltrate into Israel.

17. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS/INTERNAL CHECKPOINTS:

-- Erez Crossing was open on July 12; 4,208 laborers and 571 merchants crossed into Israel.

-- The Erez Industrial Zone was on July 12 and 561 laborers entered the zone.

-- Sufa Crossing was closed for Palestinian laborers on July 12, but was open for construction materials.

-- Karni Terminal was partially open on July 12.

-- Rafah Terminal was open on July 12 in both directions without age restrictions.

-- Route Four (Salahadeen Road), the main north-south traffic artery, was open on July 12 with the exception of the closure noted below, with a major detour at Netzarim Junction.

-- The Gush Qatif checkpoint was open July 12 after the closure reported above in "injuries/explosions."

-- Toufah checkpoint was open, except to males aged 16-30.

18. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- Israeli radio reported that the GOI's political and security cabinet would meet on July 12 to discuss the deployment of Egyptian border police along the Philadelphi Strip, the issue of crossing points, and the question of when

Gaza would be sealed-off in preparation for disengagement.

-- Israeli press noted that on July 12 that a number of members of the Knesset, including the Chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, filed an appeal against the Attorney General's decision that the Knesset need not approve the deployment of Egyptian border guards along the Philadelphi Strip.

-- Several Israeli papers reported July 12 that a GOI team had traveled to Washington to request USD 2.2 billion in assistance to cover military costs of disengagement and to develop the Negev and Galilee regions within Israel.

PEARCE